



Steve Thalheimer, Superintendent

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Chairman Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW,
Washington, DC 20554

October 18, 2017

Dear Chairman Pai,

I am writing today in response to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Public Notice which, among other things, considers changes to the E-Rate program. Before delving into my response to the proposed changes, I want to thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program and for the critical programmatic and policy changes the commission adopted in 2014. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

Fairfield Community Schools has benefited greatly as a rural district from E-Rate benefits. Over the past three years, we have been able to saturate our buildings with wireless access points and grow from 75 to over 200 megabytes of broadband. This has allowed us to go 1:1 at our Fairfield Jr-Sr High School, and we are supporting over 200 devices at each of our three elementary schools.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. As the FCC moves forward with this public notice, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works. Any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential and ensuring the FCC remains a good steward of the changes adopted 2014, allowing those changes to progress and play out as intended.

E-Rate played a critical role in the rapid and significant expansion of connectivity in schools, and the 2014 modernization was a much needed update to ensure more schools and libraries are connected to broadband. The E-Rate's investment in Category 2 Wi-Fi and internal connections funding is extremely valuable and could not be replaced by school, district or state funds.

In order to accommodate local formative assessments for instruction and to handle the mandates of Indiana's on-line testing, we have already committed to the increased bandwidth mentioned above and contracted for more connectivity. We have used local general obligation bonds and state technology loans to acquire the hardware to provide our students on-line access and digital learning; we have to have E-Rate funding to connect them to the resources of the world.

In closing, I reiterate my district's continued, strong support for and reliance upon the E-Rate program for being able to access and afford the high-speed connectivity that is so central to our students' learning. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Steve Thalheimer, Superintendent